



UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL



Distr. LIMITED

E/ECA/ATRCW/RCIWD.4/6
5 October 1989

Original : ANGLAIS

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

Fourth Regional Conference on Integration
of Women in Development on the implementation
of the Arusha Strategies for the Advancement of
Women in Africa

6-10 November 1989
Abuja, Federal Republic of Nigeria

THE FLOW OF RESOURCES TO WOMEN IN AFRICA IN
THE CONTEXT OF THE FOOD AND DEBT CRISIS

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I. The Context : The African Crisis and its Significance for Women

1. There now exists a staggering amount of writing on the African crisis, so that our knowledge of its nature and its impact on society as a whole is fairly extensive. Yet, because so little of the analysis is conducted in gender-specific terms, we have limited concrete knowledge of how the crisis affects women in their various roles. As the Director General of the United Nations Office at Vienna observed, what happens to women in the context of the crisis takes place "in a kind of factual darkness at what could be called the micro-level of the home; the workplace and the community" while "the crisis itself (is) expressed in terms of macro-economic variables"1/.
2. This state of affairs is indicative of how much distance has yet to be covered in bringing gender issues to the forefront of intellectual and policy debate; at the same time, however, it highlights the technical complexity of working out methods for determining the impact of the crisis on women. Even so, a paper such as this, which attempts to discuss the flow of resources to women in Africa in the context of the food and debt crisis, must attempt, even if generally, to articulate the significance of the crisis for women.
3. The essence of the African crisis is perhaps best summed up by the sobering verdict of the World Bank that "low-income Africa (was) poorer in 1986 than it was a generation ago in 1960". And for 1986-1988, according to ECA "the deterioration in the overall economic situation in Africa continued unabated as economic performance during the period was generally disappointing... per capital income fell by 2.0 and 2.2 per cent in (1986 and 1987) respectively.
4. The crisis has both internal and external dimensions, and it is the mutually reinforcing nature of these dimensions that lends complexity to the African predicament. At the root of the crisis lies a seriously flawed capacity for production, a fact established by incontestable statistical evidence. For many years now GDP in sub-Saharan Africa has either been stagnating or declining, and the overall record is distinctly worse than that for low-income countries as a whole. Even more ominous is the fact that, given the fastest rate of population growth of all regions in the world, per capita income has actually been declining. And those hit hardest by the decline in per capita income are already the poorest members of society, of whom the majority are women.
5. Africa's predicament, which is already bleak, threatens to be even bleaker in the future. According to the Economic Commission for Africa, the future that emerges from the historical trends... is horrendous... The region as a whole would have to depend more on food aid... On the social side, all services would deteriorate in terms of quantity and quality. A smaller portion of the population would be able to have access to education, health or water. Cities would become overpopulated shantytowns as housing would become less available. As a result of such

socio-economic difficulties, the political situation would worsen. Then, riots, crimes and misery would be the order of 2008 if present trends continue without conscious change. With the weak and fragile socio-political systems, the sovereignty of African states will, then, be at stake. As such, self reliance and independence will, to the generation of 2008, sound slogans of the past.

6. The cause for the poor economic performance of African countries must be traced to the very structure of their economies, especially to the role played by the agricultural sector. And the performance of this sector has been dismal. For example, the rate of growth of agricultural production for developing Africa, which was 9.6 % in 1985, had declined to 3.8 % in 1986, and further dwindled to a mere 0.5 % in 1987 2/. The significance of these figures is that agricultural output per capita has been declining.

7. A major consequence of this performance is the "food crisis", about which so much has been written. If a society's capacity for feeding itself is taken as the most elementary test of its viability, then the continent has failed the test miserably. "Africa's food production crisis has accelerated since the early 1970's when per caput food production averaged less than 2 per cent against 3 per cent for population per annum and the per caput food production index fell from 210 kg (in wheat equivalent) in 1970 to 179 kg in 1980. Food annual growth rates during the 1980-1985 and 1986-1987 periods averaged 2.8 and 1.9 per cent respectively - a further deterioration" 3/.

8. Alternatively, per capita food production has declined by 20 % since the 1970s. Thus, "assuming a continuation of the present trend, by the year 2000, low-income sub-Saharan Africa would experience unprecedented severe food deficits that would be difficult to meet by a combination of commercial food imports and food aid" 4/. The food crisis is especially problematic for women in their dual roles as producers of food and carers for their families. They are affected as producers because "in Africa 85 per cent of rural women are involved in agriculture, where they produce and process as much as 80 per cent of family food consumption" 5/.

9. The structural constraints that bedevil African agriculture also determine the nature of Africa's participation in the international economy, which brings us to the external dimensions of the crisis. This aspect of the crisis can be summed up in one word : dependence. Africa's dependence on the world economy is multi-faceted and overwhelming. This economy provides markets for the continent's exports, serves as a source of much-needed imports, capital flows and technology. It is worth noting in this connection that today, a quarter century after "flag independence", African countries are even more dependent on the international economic system. Two inter-related manifestations of this dependence are the balance of payments crisis and the "debt crisis".

10. The basically agrarian nature of African economies finds reflection in the structure of exports, which is dominated by a few commodities. This concentration on a handful of commodities makes African economies vulnerable to the vagaries of the world market, a situation which is aggravated by a general trend of declining export volumes and prices. For this reason, a chronic current account deficit has become an enduring characteristic of the balance of payments of African countries. This inevitably leads to a decline in foreign exchange reserves. In 1984, for example, ECA estimated that these were only enough to finance two months of imports.
11. A weakening of foreign exchange positions has in turn led to a contraction of imports. Except for a handful of oil-exporting countries, this has meant a reduction in imports of capital goods, whose relative share in total imports has been decreasing while that of food and fuel has been increasing.
12. The deterioration in the foreign trade picture has also had an impact on capital flows from abroad. Between 1980 and 1982, for example, levels of official development assistance stagnated and "net flows from private sources declined sharply (by about 50 per cent) with the decline particularly marked for oil-importing countries" 6/. And all subsequent information confirms that the stagnation has persisted.
13. As a corollary, the continent has been trapped in a "debt crisis", which has tended to intensify in recent years, so much so that a special summit of OAU heads of state had to be convened to deliberate on this specific problem. Africa's total debt in 1988 stood at US\$ 230 billion 7/, no small burden for the continent's fragile economies. This figure represents more than 81 per cent of total regional GDP and more than 314 per cent of the annual value of the exports of goods and services 8/. And the debt service ratio had reached 40 per cent in 1988. What is more alarming is that these unhealthy developments have taken place in spite of repeated reschedulings and mounting difficulties in securing new loans.
14. It should be obvious from the foregoing that the African economic crisis has underlying causes, that these causes are mutually reinforcing, that they are both endogenously and exogenously generated and that therefore - they are complex. Such a profound crisis has consequences that transcend the economic sphere.
15. Obviously, the most far-reaching impact is the deterioration in the quality of life, so much so that in many countries "the main issue at stake has not been one of economic and social development, but one of sheer survival".
16. Note should be taken in this connection of the serious problem of urban unemployment, which has been exacerbated by the crisis. Given declining rates of economic growth side by side with a rapidly growing population, the unemployment situation had to deteriorate. According to ILO/JASPA estimate, "unemployment in urban areas would work out to

a startling rate of between 30 per cent and 40 per cent of the urban labour force". Again this affects women more than men, because the former, who are already underrepresented in the labour force (especially in industry) and who are relegated to marginalized positions even when employed, are more likely to be laid off in times of rising unemployment.

17. The other costs of the crisis involve the massive displacement of people and widespread social and political instability. Millions have been forced to abandon their homes in search of food, and this has contributed to the enormous problem of refugees and displaced persons with which the continent has been saddled. And such status compounds the problem of women even more.

18. To sum up, in this environment of economic and social crisis, it would be no exaggeration to state that women as a group have been the most adversely affected by the African crisis. This is because, in their roles as producers (especially of food), as mothers, as wives, and - in many countries as breadwinners for the family, but most importantly as a disadvantaged constituency, women are particularly vulnerable to the crisis.

19. What makes matters worse is that they are also negatively affected by the measures governments take to cope with the crisis. Many African States have resorted to structural adjustment programmes, which programmes have in many cases aggravated - not alleviated - the crisis. As the Secretary General of the United Nations has pointed out, "The most vulnerable population groups, in particular women, youth, the disabled and the aged have been severely and adversely affected, directly and indirectly, by such measures as the withdrawal of subsidies on staple food items, the imposition of limits on wage increases at or below the inflation rate, the retrenchment of civil servants and private sector personnel frequently belonging to the lowest salary categories, and the cutting of expenditures on social services, including health and education, and on basic infrastructure. Access to food has become more difficult for large segments of the population, with the result that malnutrition has increased, particularly among children, infants and pregnant women" 8/. It is for these reasons that an examination of resource flows to women needs to be undertaken in the context of the deep-rooted economic and social malaise that is commonly referred to as the African crisis. But this task has to be preceded by an identification of the major conceptual and methodological problems involved.

2. CONCEPTUAL AND METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

20. The tasks involved in a study of flow of resources are of enormous magnitude, and this for at least three main reasons. The first concerns the determination of what is meant by resource flows "to women" since these cover a wide gamut of activities. But even if an understanding can be achieved as to what these mean, there is the second problem of determining the exact magnitude of resources that flow to women. If the job is to be done with any degree of accuracy, it would require drawing

up a complete inventory of women's programmes on a country-by-country basis and aggregating them to obtain a regional total, a task which can only be described as daunting at best. Thirdly, there is the even more intractable task of determining the impact of such resource flows both at a local and regional basis. For these reasons, a more detailed examination of the conceptual and methodological issues involved is in order.

2.1 Resource Flows

21. Resource flows must first of all be identified by source. Broadly speaking, there are resources that are generated internally within each country and/or within the continent itself, and there are those that come from abroad. The former could presumably be assembled from budgetary data, but matters are not as simple as that for the reason that government budgets are seldom, if ever, organized in such a manner as to yield information on women's programmes. The external sources are conventionally classified as bilateral (between two governments), multilateral (resource flows from international organizations), and private (which essentially means from non-governmental organizations).

22. A proper determination of the magnitude of resources would require identification of the resources proffered by all these sources. This task would be confronted with the problem that most of the donors do not report their aid flows in a manner that is gender-specific; all too often the classification follows the traditional breakdown by sectors or by general programmes, without giving focus to women's programmes.

23. Secondly, there is the question of resource identification by type. In this case, one could distinguish between financial, physical and human resources. While financial resources may not raise serious problems of valuation, matters are different with respect to the other two because they do not lend themselves to easy quantification.

24. All these, of course, have to be identified on a country by country basis and aggregated for the entire region. And this is assuming that there is a common understanding of "women's programmes", an incorrect assumption as it will be demonstrated below.

2.2 Resource Flows to Women

25. The problem here is, given the wide range of development activities, how to draw the line between those that can legitimately be described as women's programmes and those that cannot. The question can be looked at in three ways. One way would be to include all programmes that are "relevant to women", but this leads to further questions. In one sense, one could argue that all projects are relevant to women because they are likely to benefit women as members of society. But this is not a fruitful approach as it does not permit to focus specifically on women. As Helzner states "since the condition of women is different from that of their community as a whole, the questions raised about women in development must be different from those raised about development in general. In

the past, the effects on women of general development efforts have been mainly unintended effects, and it is a demonstrated fact that in many cases they have set women back. Often this is because women's interests are simply ignored in the planning and implementation stages". But one should also avoid the other extreme of confining the concept of women's programmes to such activities as home economics, family planning, etc., because this is too narrow and because it reinforces the traditional stereotypes of the role of women.

26. A second way of looking at the issue is to define women's programmes as those containing "elements involving women" or as those with a "women's component". Indeed there is now an increasing tendency to incorporate a women's component in all projects, even if this is usually done either as an afterthought or rather perfunctorily, merely as a matter of form. Still, projects of this type have some usefulness, because they give attention to women in their double role.

27. Finally, there are women's projects in the strict sense of the word, meaning those that have women as their only target group. These are usually intended to raise women's incomes and to enhance their self-help capability. There is no problem of identification here, because the question of distinguishing between general and women-specific activities does not arise. For this reason one might be tempted to concentrate on this kind of activity only, but this would obviously give a less than comprehensive picture. Ideally, therefore, one should combine programmes specifically intended for women and those that have a women's component; practical problems on the other hand, might not always permit this approach.

2.3 Impact

28. Assessing the impact of women's programmes is the most intractable problem of all. In general, impact could be examined from either of two angles. One way would be to evaluate programmes on the basis of what they set out to achieve. In other words, one would ask if they have been successful in meeting their intended goals. These goals could be narrow or broad. This may be considered a fair approach because it does not seek to evaluate a project on the basis of objectives it was not established to fulfil.

29. But there is also a case for arguing that a programme should be assessed not merely on the basis of its own specific objectives but independent of these, i.e., in terms of its impact on what are generally considered desirable objectives for women's programmes. This raises the question of what criteria should be invoked to determine the impact of women's programmes. Although one could come up with a long list of criteria, the major questions to ask are to what extent a programme has succeeded in :

- (a) raising the incomes of women;
- (b) improving the working conditions of women, including reducing their work load and providing them with a better working environment;

- (c) advancing the education and training of women;
- (d) allowing women greater participation in and control over the decision-making process in society; and
- (e) enabling women to exercise greater control over their own lives.

30. Once the criteria are established, there remains the awkward problem of measurement of impact. There are very few studies of this nature to date, owing to, among other things, confusion over programme goals, lack of interest in evaluating impact, the relatively brief time period in which women's programmes have been focussed upon, and - most importantly - the immense difficulties of measurement.

31. The effects of a programme could be tangible or intangible. Thus, although it may not be difficult to measure increases in income, it is a far from simple matter to determine if a programme has been successful in making women more aware of their rights as members of a community.

32. One must also be able to distinguish between the immediate and long-term impact of a programme. While the former may be easier to determine, the latter can only be established over the long haul and it happens to be the more important of the two.

33. There is also the problem of determining impact at different levels : project, programme, country, region. The wider the level of aggregation, the more formidable the task of determining impact becomes.

34. To sum up, one has to realize that this study involves numerous conceptual and methodological problems on top of the all too obvious problem of data availability. For this reason, therefore, the study confined itself to general statements of a qualitative nature. Precise quantification, although highly desirable, was not feasible, given the constraints within which the study was conducted.

3. RESOURCE FLOWS

3.1 Domestic Resources

35. A consideration of resource flows must start with the recognition that, in the final analysis, domestic resources should play a greater role than foreign resources if development is to be autonomous and sustainable. External resources, however instrumental they may be in the initial phase, cannot be a substitute for indigenous effort; in fact, the litmus test of their usefulness is the extent to which they make further external assistance unnecessary. For this reason, a long-term perspective must underscore the importance of domestic resources. Herein lies the justification for dealing with "the domestic front" first.

36. For a number of years now, women's concerns have been receiving attention in continental forums. We note, for example, that two regional meetings on the integration of women in development had taken place prior

to 1980, which year saw the unveiling of the Lagos Plan of Action. This document is noteworthy for the fact that it devoted an entire chapter to "Women and Development". The chapter argued that "the steps to be taken to solve the problems of African women should not be marginal and separate from the question of over-all development", and called on member states "to provide adequate resources and technical personnel" to make national machineries for women functional. The Plan also recognized that "it is important to stress to national directors of statistics the need for breakdowns by sex in order to identify areas for action relevant to women". The Lagos Plan of Action is noteworthy, not for any original ideas expressed, for there are none, but because it recognized the importance of the gender question. In fact, its critics say that they have "both appreciated the attention given to the issue and criticized its compartmentalization as a chapter" adding that, although the Organization of African Unity (OAU) had, subsequent to the Lagos Plan, sponsored some WLD activities and that it had taken "a formal stance" to encourage the development of women-focused organizations in Africa, "the effort was half-hearted" 9/.

37. The next important milestone was the third regional meeting which was held in Arusha in October 1984, with the main objective of drafting strategies in preparation for the 1985 Nairobi Conference marking the end of the UN Decade for Women. In 1986, African States came out with the African Priority Programme for Economic Recovery (APPER), which was presented to a special session of the United Nations General Assembly. In a sense, APPER represents a step backward compared to the Lagos Plan as far as women's issues are concerned. The document barely mentions the problem, except in a couple of marginal references. Where it discusses food and agriculture, it states that "the focus of attention must be the peasant farmer with special reference to female farmers who dominate food production in most countries", and in the section dealing with human resources, the only mention of women is the following : "We are also committed to ensure good working conditions and the growing role and participation of our(sic!) women and youth, particularly those living in the rural areas, in the development process".

38. One can go even farther and argue that the commitment in deeds of regional organizations to women's concerns leaves much to be desired. For instance, it is revealing that to date the OAU has set up a women's unit in its secretariat but has failed to make it fully operational although it is quite some time since an expression of intent was made.

39. It may be contended that the ECA has done considerable work in this regard, and the existence of the African Training and Research Centre for Women (ATRCW) may be cited as proof. Yet, the ATRCW depends mostly on extra-budgetary sources for financing its activities. Secondly, it is inadequately staffed, its permanent posts are only a handful. For a centre whose activities are of continental scope this is obviously too small. It is also noteworthy that out of all resources allocated to the ECA Secretariat, female professional employees represent 11 % of employees of that category, a figure that falls far short of the 30 % target for 1990 set by the United Nations General Assembly.

40. A third regional organization worth looking at is the African Development Bank (ADB). This institution has established a Women in Development Unit in its central Projects Department and "the unit has drafted a position paper as well as guidelines that Bank staff use in the preparation of Bank-financed projects". In its lending procedures, the ADB Group "is placing a premium on projects that promote women's contributions to development". Yet, as the ADB Group itself acknowledges, it has yet to take steps that include "the strengthening of its WID Unit, the formulation of coherent policy, the establishment of comprehensive guidelines and the mobilization of human and financial resources".

41. At the national level too, there is no country that does not have a machinery of integrating women in development. However women's concerns are not accorded the seriousness that they deserve in most plan and budget documents of individual states. One obvious manifestation is that plan or budget documents hardly attempt to present resource allocation patterns along gender-specific lines. For this reason, it is virtually impossible to arrive at a determination of the resources devoted to women's programmes. The guess can be hazarded, however, that they are likely to be insignificant.

3.2 External resources

42. There is no doubt that there is greater awareness today of gender issues among the international aid community compared to the situation ten or fifteen years ago. Perhaps largely due to the educational efforts of the United Nations Decade for Women 1976-1985 and due to activities linked to it, there is hardly a donor today that does not, at least at the level of policy articulation, express a commitment to women's concerns.

43. One should hasten to add, however, that policy articulation is one thing while practical implementation could be altogether different as demonstrated below. Yet, since the chasm between declared policy and practice is seldom complete, it is difficult to consider resource flows without some understanding of the relevant policy framework. This is why an examination of current policy and its evolution would be in order. But since this cannot be done for all donors, or even for all the major ones, the discussion will be limited to one major multilateral source (the World Bank) and to one bilateral source (the United States Agency for International Development) in the hope that they will give a fairly representative picture. A few other donors will be treated less extensively.

A. The World Bank

44. The World Bank's interest in gender issues is of fairly recent origin. It was only in a 1977 speech on population issues that "World Bank President McNamara mentions women for the first time as target group for development interventions" 10/. The Bank subsequently recognized the gender issue in a 1979 document entitled "Recognizing the "invisible"

woman in Development : the World Bank's Experience". This document "highlights employment and income generation as one area of Bank work because women make up a large percentage of the poor, and because women's employment outside the home is related to declining birth rates". The World Bank has now a Women in Development (WID) division in the population and human resources department, while division "is engaged in a number of activities designed to increase operational impact and capacity, initiate research and policy work to provide improved analytical tools, and build up operational capacity through the development and dissemination of training".

45. In the early eighties, however, for the Bank and other major lenders, the recession and the debt crisis seem to have dictated a retrenchment of anti-poverty programme. Consequently, "the concern with the poor in general, and with women in poverty in particular, was put on the back burner". But a resurgence seems to have taken place "in the last year or two". In a 1987 speech to the Safe Motherhood Conference in Nairobi, Bank President Conable "argued for increasing women's earning capacity and control over their own earnings". Indeed, the Bank's Annual Report for 1988 announces that a "new approach...initiated in fiscal 1987...aims at making its efforts on WID more targeted. This approach, which gathered momentum in fiscal 1988, concentrated on showing what can actually be done to include women in development efforts and how inclusion, in turn, contributes to the attainment of broader development objectives...".

46. The 1988 Annual Report, in essence, recognizes that, prior to 1987, the Bank's WID activities had been "limited to studies and staff training". Even more forthcoming is Bank President Conable, who wrote in a memo of April 12, 1989 : "I have been thinking a long time about the depth and strength of our commitment to the Women in Development Initiative... My review of major economic reports and strategy papers leads me to the conclusion that the role of women in the development process has rarely been integrated into the strategic thinking underlying country assistance programs. There are, of course, exceptions to this pattern. But we must raise our sights and work on a broader front in order to be effective - and we must act now".

47. He then goes on to call for an assessment of women's potential role in development for each country, and announces that he has set aside US\$ 35,000 for each country for this purpose. It must be added that in none of the Bank's annual world development reports is the role of women discussed specifically, not even in the 1989 report which concerned itself with human resources. Further, an examination of the Bank's lending records will not give a glimpse of what it allocated for women's programmes, for the simple reason that the data are not disaggregated along gender-specific lines.

48. The 1989 report on Sustainable Growth with equity a long term perspective for sub-Saharan Africa has depicted the role of women in production of food crops and trade, in the informal sector and as providers of social services to the community. The document discusses various constraints which confine them in small scale operations and calls for special attention to women's legal, economic and social rights. This makes it clear that the Bank's involvement in women's programmes is now on a sound footing.

B. United States Agency for International Development (USAID)

49. When one turns to the United States Agency for International Development, we find that its concern with women dates to an earlier period, specifically to the "Percy Amendment", which required aid programmes to "be administered so as to give particular attention to those programs, projects and activities which tend to integrate women into the national economies of foreign countries, thus improving their status and assisting in the total development effort". In 1974 an Office of Women was set up within USAID to administer funds designated "primarily to support activities which will increase the economic productivity and income earning capacity of women". Its two main priorities are described as to : "(1) institutionalize among A.I.D. staff the ability to analyze gender issues and their impact on project effectiveness; and (2) while undertaking the above, facilitate the integration of women into all phases of A.I.D. programs and projects" 11/.

50. In 1982, AID issued its policy paper entitled "Women in Development", whose essence has been summarized as follows :

- One of the premises of A.I.D.'s women in development policy is that gender roles constitute a key variable in the socio-economic condition of any country;
- One that can be decisive in the success or failure of development plans.

51. One reading of this policy paper is that from a general call for integration, the thinking at the agency evolved to the identification of women in development with the expansion of women's economic opportunities.

52. It is thus clear that USAID is on record with a strong commitment to women's programmes. But a closer look suggests that policy and practice have not always moved in tandem. This comes out from the hearing before the Select Committee on Hunger of the House of Representatives of the United States Congress, held on April 8, 1987. One of those who made an appearance to provide testimony stated that the agency "has reduced its interest in women in recent years". In the same hearing, the chairperson referred to "proposals which have been made to eliminate or decrease the role played by A.I.D.'s Women in Development Office" and

asked, "What do you think will happen to the women in development initiative if this did happen?" The response was as follows: "I think it would be disastrous. There has already been a decreasing emphasis and concern with that office for the last 7 years, and I think it's very clear that as a result there has been less pressure on the Agency rather than more to increase its concern of including women in all of its programs".

53. It is also interesting to note that "while the stated annual budget for women in development is US\$ 2 million, the total WID budget is very difficult to determine" ^{12/}. In fact, independent research has shown that "only 4.3 per cent of regional bureau funding for USAID projects in Africa went to projects that were either specifically directed at women or had a component including women; in addition, only 4 of 45 agricultural projects designated women as beneficiaries". Let this not be taken as unique to USAID. "The pattern uncovered in USAID, where sufficient resources are allocated to mount a WID program but not to carry it out effectively, is also charted for the United Nations and other organizations. Between 1974 and 1980, a period that included half of the United Nations Women's Decade, only 4 per cent of projects involved the participation of women; of these, half had only a minor level of participation by women" ^{13/}.

54. The case of USAID discussed above illustrates, the information gap. Even the donors themselves do not seem to have exact knowledge of how much they devote to women's programmes globally, let alone specifically for Africa.

C. Canadian International Development Assistance (CIDA)

55. CIDA's interest in women seems to be a fairly recent one, because it is only in 1984 that it "approved a framework and an implementation strategy for the integration of women in development" ^{14/}. In fact, an action plan was launched only in 1986 and it was intended to cover a five-year period. In this plan, WID objectives are well articulated and cover the broad spectrum of women's activities.

56. Africa is targeted to be the single most important recipient of CIDA's total foreign aid, accounting for 45 per cent of bilateral aid for the five-year period starting 1987 ^{15/}. It is reported in the 1986 Women in Development : CIDA Action Plan that Canadian assistance to Africa in 1986-87 amounted to more than US\$ 900 million, but the women's component of such assistance is not revealed. What is disclosed, however, is that over the period 1986-90, \$ 25 million have been allotted to women's programmes in Africa. On an annual basis, this would work out to \$ 5 million, or to less than 1 per cent of total assistance.

D. Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA)

57. SIDA is on record as stating that its approach to gender issues is "to recognize women's role in development cooperation, rather than to support separate women's programmes". The example provided is that "in agriculture this would mean...to support not only cash crop production

but also extension, credits marketing, research, etc. on food crops, i.e. traditionally women's crops". "SIDA stated that it has not yet found methods to assess the distribution of resources within regular cooperation to women and men". What is interesting about SIDA's position is that it demonstrates the difficulty donors have in determining exactly how much of their assistance goes to benefit specifically women.

E. United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)

58. UNIFEM is the successor to the Voluntary Fund for the UN Decade for Women, which was set up by the General Assembly towards the end of 1987; the transition to UNIFEM (henceforth also referred to as the Fund) was effected by a decision taken in December of 1984. The Fund was set up as "a separate and identifiable entity in autonomous association with UNDP", because it was felt that "a special financial and technical enabling instrument - a fund was needed to reach the long-term goal of having women considered in appropriate ways in all development cooperation activities" 16/. Quite clearly, therefore, all the activities of the Fund are directed specifically at women.

59. The Fund's annual programme was to the tune of about US\$ 7 and 10 million in 1987 and 1988, respectively, but an annual amount of \$ 20 million is foreseen by 1991 17/. However, Africa's share for the five years 1987-1991 is budgeted as \$ 0.5, 0.9, 0.95 and 1.03 million. In all of these years the average of Africa's share works to about 7 per cent.

F. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

60. UNDP established a division for women in development in April 1987 with the aim of assisting governments "in integrating and promoting women in their development activities". In 1988 the UNDP Administrator admitted that its programmes prior to 1987 were marked by "gender blindness", but states that thenceforth "country programming will attempt to address women's actual and potential contribution to sectoral and overall development in a more concrete manner".

G. United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA)

61. Of the four priority areas of assistance to sub-Saharan Africa approved by the Governing Council of UNFPA in 1987, one is "contributing to the improvement of the status of women". But the Fund's assistance in this area dates to a much earlier period, although on a very modest scale. Total UNFPA assistance to Africa over the period 1970-85 amounted to US\$ 206 million, which represents 15.4 % of overall programme assistance 18/. Of this sum, only 1 % was devoted to "special programmes related mainly to women". In fairness to the UNFPA, it must be recognized that most of its other activities (for example, population information, education and communication) do benefit women.

62. In terms of plans for the future UNFPA has allotted \$ 3.6 million to "projects seeking to advance the status and conditions of women" for the period 1987-1991. It is noted that "this (is) more than three times the amount expended from 1969 to 1986". The amounts spent in 1987 and 1988 for "special programmes" in sub-Saharan Africa were \$ 0.4 and \$ 1.1 million, respectively, their relative shares in total assistance representing 1.8 % and 2.6 % 19/. Thus, while the level of assistance to women's programmes is low, it is encouraging that it has been rising in both absolute and relative terms.

H. International Labour Office (ILO)

63. Although the ILO's interest in women's concerns dates back to its establishment in 1919, its "earlier efforts were concentrated only in protecting women's reproductive function and improving their miserable conditions"; by 1947, however, its policies "underlined equality of opportunity and remuneration of women workers".

64. Currently, the ILO divides its women's programmes into "women-specific" and "women-component" projects, with the latter defined as those "which include a distinct women's component in the provision of separate resources for project activities aimed at women, or projects where the portion of the overall resources spent on female beneficiaries could be easily identified, for example through payrolls". The ILO states that "whereas previously resources were directed primarily to women-specific projects, gradually a two-pronged approach has emerged, whereby experience gained through women-specific projects is used to make mainstream projects more adapted to women's needs, by building in specific components". Globally, the ILO was running 137 projects as of June 1989, with a total cost of US\$ 44.2 million.

65. Information on the magnitude of ILO's assistance to women's programmes in Africa is very comprehensive, and the essentials, as of June 1989, are summarized below :

<u>project Type</u>	<u>Cost (US\$)</u>
Multi-bilateral	10 203 036
UNDP/ILO	10 640 109
UNFPA/ILO	1 594 870
ILO/World Bank	65 973

I. United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

66. UNICEF's stand, at least as of 10 April 1989, is similar to that of SIDA. This position is that "projects which are women-specific only should be the exception", while what is favoured is "the integral programme approach...to achieve the full incorporation of women and girls into national and sectoral planning" 20/. This means that special projects for women will be supported only "when these function as "bridging strategies" to bring women to a threshold of opportunity so that they can more fully participate and benefit from mainstream development efforts".

67. For this reason, it is difficult to determine the women's component of UNICEF's assistance, and this example lends additional force to the earlier argument that in many instance even the donors themselves are hard put to indicate the magnitude of resources they are devoting to women's programmes.

Conclusions

68. The organizations discussed above are by no means all, or even most of the donors involved in women's programmes in Africa. For this reason, the discussion makes no claims to a comprehensive review of the resources available for funding such programmes. Yet, it is adequate for providing a general picture and for drawing certain conclusion.

69. First, all major donors are now on record as expressing commitment to women's concerns. Even if a good deal of this commitment is of recent origin, the indications are that it is likely to abide. This is an encouraging development.

70. Second, the resources allocated to women's programmes in Africa show a rising trend, and there is satisfaction to be gained from this as well.

71. Third, and as a qualification to the two conclusions above, it is noted that (a) funds allocated usually fall short of the rhetoric that accompanies them, and (b) they pale into insignificance when compared with the enormous unmet needs of African women.

72. Therefore, while it is encouraging that women's concerns have been commanding greater attention among the donor community, it should also be remembered that there is no room for complacency in this regard.

4. IMPACT OF RESOURCES

73. Without rehashing the arguments presented in Section II of this paper, there is need to reiterate that the impact of resource flows on women is extremely difficult to determine. The cardinal question is, of course, what difference, if any, these resources have made in the lives of African women. And the answer to this question can be attempted at two levels.

74. At the policy level, one is interested in finding out to what extent decision makers are sensitized about gender issues and thus to what extent the policy environment is more "enabling" for African women. There can be no doubt that the governments of the region are today more conscious of women's concerns than they were a few years back. What one cannot be sure of, however, is how much of this is due to resources expended on women programmes and how much of it is due to efforts made to bring gender issues to the forefront of the development agenda. While it seems plausible that the latter factor is more weighty, it is likely that some of the resources, especially those that have been instrumental in the setting up of national machineries for women in various countries, have contributed to the emergence of a greater awareness of gender issues by those who make decisions. It is another matter, however, when one comes

to the participation of women in the decision-making process. In this respect, one could argue intuitively that women have made very little dent, notwithstanding the semblance of involvement that one sees in certain circumstances.

75. At the operational level, the significant question is whether the resources committed to women's programmes have improved the situation of African women in terms of raising their incomes, reducing their burden of work, giving them greater access to resources and to opportunities for advancement, etc. Since this is a question that is virtually impossible to answer for reasons sketched in Section II of this paper, we are compelled to confine ourselves to some general statements.

76. The impact of women's programmes depends on a wide variety of factors, including the size and source of resources, the type of activities which the resources are devoted to, the policy environment, the absorptive capacity of the aid recipient, and the socio-cultural milieu, to name only some of the most important variables.

77. With respect to the size of funds, there is nothing to add to what was said in Section III; it is the familiar story of too many needs but too few resources. Perhaps the more interesting question here is how effectively the admittedly limited resources have been utilized. A pertinent issue here is one of sustainability, i.e., how sustainable the various women's programmes are, and it is in this context that the source of funding becomes relevant. The story of foreign-financed programmes that terminate or continue ineffectively when the assistance ceases is too familiar to recount here, and it would not be off the mark to speculate that this is true of at least some women's programmes in Africa.

78. Another important determinant of impact is of course the nature of activities undertaken. As indicated earlier, women's programmes could be classified as those that are women-specific, those with a women's component and those that integrate women in mainstream projects. The merits and limitations of these types of programmes are by now so well-known that they can be passed with a brisk review.

79. The first type have the advantages that all project resources accrue to women, that they give women greater opportunities for acquiring leadership qualities, and that, in the absence of male competition, it may be easier to train women in non-traditional skills. The major problems with such projects are that they tend to be small-scale and under-funded and that, because they isolate women from mainstream development, they lead to their further marginalization.

80. Larger projects with a women's component usually generate more resources and they give women a greater opportunity for "catching up" with men. However, the women's component is likely to receive less funding than other components.

81. The main advantages of integrated mainstream projects are the greater resources they command and the guarantee they provide against the marginalization of women. However, it is quite possible for women's concerns to be excluded or under-represented if care is not exercised to prevent such an outcome. Because women start from a situation of comparative disadvantage relative to men, they may lose out in integrated projects.

82. Traditionally, donors have tended to concentrate on women-specific projects, but recent years have witnessed a move away from such a strategy, at least in cases where the major concern has been to raise women's income 21/. USAID evaluation of 102 projects over 10 years concludes that women-only projects are best suited to delivering training rather than to increasing production and generating income 22/. While this may legitimately be taken as an argument for integration, one must however "make sure that it is the women and not the project funds that are integrated". This is because, although the funds committed may be adequate, women may not benefit fully from them simply because they are not given enough opportunities to participate in the running of the projects.

83. When considering the impact of women's programmes, another distinction worth bearing in mind is that between projects with a production orientation and those with a welfare orientation. In general, the latter have had limited success. Welfare oriented programmes, such as nutrition or family planning, view women as "beneficiaries" rather than "producers" of development. The "beneficiary" view presumes that women do not have a major contributing role to economic development. Typically, welfare oriented programs are designed to deliver information, provide education and services and promote the public good in the form of community programs. They are generally characterized as small scale, ad hoc and focusing on stereotypical female tasks and volunteers are often requested to work as program implementors or participants.

84. In one study Buvinic suggests that four types of projects "have been supported most often to expand the economic opportunities of poor women", namely small and microenterprise development, income generating projects for poor women, vocational education and food for work projects. The record is summarized as follows: "The project experience of the last decade has shown that small and microenterprise development projects are more effective vehicles to increase the economic opportunities of poor women, especially when compared to income generating projects and food for work interventions. Vocational education schemes have not been very successful but the evidence suggests that these schemes can increase women's income earning opportunities if they are implemented by technically qualified agencies and train women in skills for which there is an effective demand in the labor market.

85. The impact of resources also depends on the absorptive capacity of those on the receiving end. This includes, among others, institutional capability, technical expertise, and degree of motivation. In most cases, these are wanting. As Otero concludes, the choice of implementing agency is one of the most important elements in project design. One might assume that women's organizations are the best suited to implement projects that include women. However, experience with project designed to reach women indicates that the failure of programs is often traced to lack of technical and/or managerial expertise on the part of the implementing agency, and women's organizations are sometimes weak in this respect. This should not be misconstrued as an argument for leaving women's projects to "expert" organizations. The point is rather that implementing agencies should have "a blend of appropriate technical expertise and a commitment to developing or recruiting expertise on women's issues relevant to the project" 23/.

V. CONCLUDING REMARKS

86. One fact that emerges quite clearly from this paper is the paucity of readily available information on resource flows to women in Africa. To begin with, and as indicated earlier, a number of donors find it impossible to determine the women's component of their assistance programmes. However, even for those who do not find this impossible, the comprehensive aggregation of the available information and its systematic interpretation are rather daunting tasks.

87. It needs to be emphasized that this is true of African governments as well. Because little, if any, attempt is made to organize the available information on a gender-specific basis, it is impossible to determine, for example, what percentage of budgetary resources is devoted to women or to establish the impact of various projects on women.

88. This state of affairs is itself symptomatic of the attention given to women's concerns. If such attention is to be real, it must transcend policy articulation and involve serious monitoring of women's programmes, for no proper analysis of their effectiveness can be undertaken in the absence of such monitoring. Nor can the more important task of impact assessment be conducted without effective monitoring. As an immediate task, therefore, a study of the type attempted in this paper, but backed by the requisite resources and involving a much broader time frame for the exercise, needs to be undertaken.

89. This will require the concerted effort of both donors and recipients of assistance. Donors need to establish a machinery which can serve as a clearing house on assistance pertaining to women's programmes. This does not necessarily involve setting up a new institution; what is required is a mechanism through which existing institutions can pool together whatever information is available. Information is of the essence, and its comprehensive and systematic compilation brooks no delay.

90. On the part of African governments and international organizations such as ECA this requires constant monitoring of women's programmes with a view to enabling a regular assessment of their impact on African women. Obviously, there is no shortage of evaluation reports on specific projects in individual countries. What is required, however, is a national and regional perspective, and this is clearly lacking. Such periodic assessments are the basis for improving on the design and implementation of women's programmes and must be accorded the attention they deserve.

91. In the final analysis, the ultimate test of assistance to women's programmes is their success or failure in galvanizing African policy makers to take gender issues more seriously, and this is a task that has yet to begin in earnest.

92. In a larger sense, therefore, what is critical is not really how much money has gone into income-generating activities here or vocational training programmes there, but how much has been done to create an environment in which women will be not only participants in the process of development but also beneficiaries of its fruits. Even more, the crucial test is how much say women have in decisions that affect society as well as their own lives as women. By these admittedly demanding criteria, the results obtained to date, even if they should not be disparaged, leave much to be desired. And this represents a major challenge to African governments and regional organizations, which must bear the major responsibility for creating an environment which would enable the continent's women to realize their full potentials.

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